

being operable in a plurality of use positions ranging from an upright position to a fully reclined position, the linear seat recliner comprising:

a housing adapted to be coupled to the seat back;

a latching mechanism coupled to said housing and actuatable relative said housing between a latched position and an unlatched position; and

*C1 cont*

a recliner rod including a body having a first end and a second end, said body having a substantially planar top flat diametrically opposed and parallel to a substantially planar bottom flat, said top flat including a plurality of teeth positioned at said first end of said body, said plurality of teeth of said recliner rod selectively engaged with said latching mechanism when said latching mechanism is in said latched position and said second end of said recliner rod adapted to be coupled to the seat bottom; and

wherein said latching mechanism prevents relative axial movement of said recliner rod when in said latched position and said latching mechanism allows relative axial movement of said recliner rod when in said unlatched position.

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8. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A reclining seat assembly comprising:

a seat bottom having a side rail;

a seat back having a support rail pivotally coupled to said side rail;

a linear seat recliner including a housing secured to said support rail;

*C2*

a recliner rod having a first end supported for relative linear motion within said housing and a second end having an aperture, said recliner rod having a substantially planar top flat having a plurality of teeth formed therein and a substantially planar bottom flat positioned parallel thereto, said second end pivotally coupled to said side rail; and

*C2  
Contd*

a latching mechanism coupled to said housing and actuatable relative said housing between a latched position where said latching mechanism engages said teeth to prevent relative axial movement of said recliner rod and an unlatched position where said latching mechanism allows relative axial movement of said recliner rod.

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*C3*

13. (AMENDED) A recliner rod for a linear seat recliner for use in a seat having a seat back pivotally connected to a seat bottom, the seat operable in a plurality of use positions ranging from an upright position to a fully reclined position, the linear seat recliner having a housing coupled to the seat back, the linear recliner mechanism also having a latching mechanism coupled to the housing, the recliner rod comprising:

a body having a first end and a second end, said body further having a top flat diametrically opposed and substantially parallel to a bottom flat;

a paddle integrally formed with said body at said second end;

a stop integrally formed with said body at said first end;

a plurality of teeth positioned on said top flat, said plurality of teeth adapted to be engaged by the latching mechanism, said second end adapted to be coupled to the seat bottom.

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*C4*

18. (AMENDED) The method of forming a recliner rod for a linear seat recliner for use in a seat having a seat back pivotally connected to a seat bottom, the seat being operable in a plurality of use positions ranging from an upright position to a fully reclined position, the linear seat recliner having a housing coupled to the seat back, the linear recliner mechanism also having a latching mechanism coupled to the housing, the method comprising the steps of:

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*Cont*

providing a recliner rod blank having a first end, a second end, a top flat, and a bottom flat substantially parallel to said top flat;

deforming said second end of said blank to define a paddle adapted to be coupled to the seat bottom;

deforming said first end of said blank to define a stop adapted to engage the housing when the seat is in its fully reclined position; and

forming a set of teeth on said top flat, said set of teeth adapted to be selectively engageable by the latching mechanism.

*C5*

21. (AMENDED) The linear seat recliner of Claim 1 wherein said second end of said recliner rod includes a ball joint assembly to couple the recliner rod to the seat bottom.

22. (AMENDED) The reclining seat assembly of Claim 8 wherein said second end of said recliner rod includes a ball joint assembly to pivotally couple the recliner rod to said side rail.